

Allergen Food Handling Advice for WIs

On behalf of the Cookery Committee, I am writing to inform you of a change to the legislation regarding new allergen labelling requirements. Although it is not anticipated to have a major effect on food being served at WI meetings, those who prepare and/or sell food at events involving the general public will need to be aware of this change in legislation.

On 13 December 2014, legislation will require food providers to ensure they give accurate, clearly labelled allergen information on their products for consumers. Building on current allergen labelling provisions, this change will ensure that all consumers have a comprehensive list of ingredients to make it easier for people with food allergies to identify the ingredients they need to avoid. As you are aware, hidden allergens in foods can cause illness and in extreme cases fatalities to allergy sufferers. Food producers and food sellers must know exactly the ingredients in the food they serve, so that this information can be communicated to consumers

The following points should be considered if arranging a WI event which includes food:

- Where a WI provides food for meetings and events the risk of food allergens needs to be considered.
- All producers and servers of food must be aware of food allergens and the consequences of them being eaten by anyone with a food allergy.
- If a customer asks a question about allergens in a food and you do not know ask somebody who knows, do not guess.
- All food items sold/supplied to the WI should record all the ingredients used, particularly with careful reference to the 14 food allergens.
- Where members bring in ready prepared food, e.g. cakes etc. the food should be stored in its packaging together with the full list of ingredients used.
- If food is sold, it should be preferably packaged and have a label showing the full list of ingredients used.
- Food labels should clearly show the allergens present by writing in bold/colour/caps e.g. **milk** or using the term *contains milk*.
- At an event with food, there should be a nominated lead person to handle food allergy enquiries from customers.
- An easily accessible folder with an accurate ingredients list for each item is useful for the lead person.
- Allergens, particularly nuts and sesame seeds can easily contaminate other food products so ensure all equipment, hands and surfaces are thoroughly washed and dried between serving and preparing.
- If glazes and drizzles are added to foods remember to include the allergens on the label e.g. milk, egg, soy sauce etc.

- A sign or notice should be displayed for customers to ask about any allergens they wish to avoid.
- Menus should clearly identify all ingredients used in a dish.
- Any spillages of allergens need to be removed immediately and fresh cleaning and drying cloths then used, to avoid cross contamination.
- Always wash your hands thoroughly after coming into contact with allergenic products to avoid cross contamination.
- About 1% of people in the UK are intolerant to gluten, a condition known as coeliac disease. Food claimed to be “gluten free” or “very low gluten” needs to adhere to EC compositional & labelling standard*¹

A PDF of the *Allergen Information for Loose Food* leaflet, produced by the Food Standards Agency is attached for your information.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions on any food related matters.

Yours sincerely

D Sanderson

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¹ Gluten Free – 20 parts or less gluten per million

Very low Gluten – 100 parts or less gluten per million-*Only foods with cereals specially processed may make this claim*